

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

106th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 148

June 27, 2000, 5:54 p.m.
Page S-5863 Temp. Record

LABOR-HHS APPROPRIATIONS/Bigger Government, Class-Size Mandate

SUBJECT: Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2001 . . . H.R. 4577. Murray motion to waive the Budget Act for the consideration of the Murray amendment No. 3604.

ACTION: MOTION REJECTED, 44-55

SYNOPSIS: H.R. 4577, the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2001, as amended by the text of S. 2553, the Senate-reported version of the bill, will provide \$352.186 billion in new budget authority, which is \$22.422 billion more than provided in fiscal year (FY) 2000 and is \$3.998 billion less than requested. Budget authority for fiscal year 2001 discretionary spending will total \$97.820 billion. (By unanimous consent, the Senate adopted the text of S. 2553 as original text for purposes of further amendment as soon as it began consideration of the bill.)

The Murray amendment would require \$1.4 billion of the \$2.7 billion in this bill for Title VI academic achievement grants to be spent on the class-size reduction program; also, it would add, without any offsets, an extra \$350 million that would have to be spent on that program. (If reducing average class sizes is a priority for local school districts than they can use the entire \$2.7 billion provided in this bill for academic achievement grants to reduce class sizes. Alternatively, if those districts have higher priorities, this bill will permit them to spent the money on those other priorities. The Appropriations Committee put enough funds in Title VI funding in this bill to accommodate an increase to \$1.4 billion in spending on the class-size reduction program (last year \$1.325 billion was provided) and to accommodate \$1.3 billion in spending on school construction proposals of the type favored by Democrats. However, the Committee left it entirely up to each local school district to decide whether it wished to spend any title VI funds it received on Democrat's class-size and construction priorities or its own local education priorities.)

Debate was limited by unanimous consent. After debate, Senator Specter raised a point of order that the amendment violated section 302(f) of the Budget Act. Senator Murray then moved to waive the Budget Act for the consideration of the amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to waive favored the amendment; those opposing the motion to waive opposed the amendment.

(See other side)

YEAS (44)		NAYS (55)		NOT VOTING (1)	
Republicans (0 or 0%)	Democrats (44 or 100%)	Republicans (55 or 100%)	Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (1)
Akaka	Kennedy	Abraham	Hutchinson		Inouye ²
Baucus	Kerrey	Allard	Hutchison		
Bayh	Kerry	Ashcroft	Inhofe		
Biden	Kohl	Bennett	Jeffords		
Bingaman	Landrieu	Bond	Kyl		
Boxer	Lautenberg	Brownback	Lott		
Breaux	Leahy	Bunning	Lugar		
Bryan	Levin	Burns	Mack		
Byrd	Lieberman	Campbell	McCain		
Cleland	Lincoln	Chafee	McConnell		
Conrad	Mikulski	Cochran	Murkowski		
Daschle	Moynihan	Collins	Nickles		
Dodd	Murray	Coverdell	Roberts		
Dorgan	Reed	Craig	Roth		
Durbin	Reid	Crapo	Santorum		
Edwards	Robb	DeWine	Sessions		
Feingold	Rockefeller	Domenici	Shelby		
Feinstein	Sarbanes	Enzi	Smith, Bob		
Graham	Schumer	Fitzgerald	Smith, Gordon		
Harkin	Torricelli	Frist	Snowe		
Hollings	Wellstone	Gorton	Specter		
Johnson	Wyden	Gramm	Stevens		
		Grams	Thomas		
		Grassley	Thompson		
		Gregg	Thurmond		
		Hagel	Voinovich		
		Hatch	Warner		
		Helms			

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:
1—Official Business
2—Necessarily Absent
3—Illness
4—Other

SYMBOLS:
AY—Announced Yea
AN—Announced Nay
PY—Paired Yea
PN—Paired Nay

NOTE: A three-fifths majority (60) vote of the Senate is required to waive the Budget Act. After the failure of the motion to waive, the point of order was upheld and the amendment thus fell.

Those favoring the motion to waive contended:

The Murray amendment would mandate that local schools must spend \$1.4 billion of the Title VI grant funds this bill will provide them on the Federal teacher hiring program to pay the salaries of 100,000 new first-grade through third-grade public school teachers. It would also add an extra \$350 million in spending for that program. Our Republican colleagues put \$1.4 billion into Title VI so that it could be used for that purpose, but they gave local school districts the option of spending the money on other education priorities if they wished. We believe that it was a grave mistake to give that option. Many school districts will likely waste the money on frivolous projects, like buying new football uniforms or band uniforms. Those districts will then be short on funds to pay the salaries of the teachers who have already been hired under the program, and those teachers will have to be fired. We should not allow that result. We should continue providing funding, and continue insisting that it all be spent on hiring teachers, until the Federal Government is paying the salaries of 100,000 new public school teachers.

Those opposing the motion to waive contended:

The Murray amendment follows a couple of favorite Democrat themes: give aid in narrow categorical grants because State and local governments are not smart or trustworthy enough to spend it themselves; and spend more money instead of prioritizing by cutting outdated, inefficient programs to pay for new spending ideas. This bill will budget \$1.4 billion for the teacher hiring program, but only as an option. We believe that the program is wasteful and unneeded, and is only funded because it sounds good and thus wins votes for the politicians who insist on funding it. However, rather than eliminating it, we have compromised with our Democratic colleagues in this bill—we have decided to leave the matter up to local school officials. If the schools themselves agree with Democrats that they need to hire 100,000 more first-grade through third-grade teachers, then they can spend \$1.4 billion on the teacher hiring program (or even more if they wish, because there is more than \$1.4 billion in the Title VI account); if they agree with us, they can spend the money elsewhere. We imagine that in some school districts hiring new teachers will be a priority, and the money will be used on the Federal program, but in most districts there are much more pressing needs that will be met instead. Democrats are not willing to let the schools themselves decide. With this amendment, they would mandate that \$1.4 billion (plus an extra \$350 million in new spending) be spent on the hiring program to reduce the average class size to 18 or fewer students or the schools would not get the money. Does it matter to Democrats that most States already have average class sizes of 18 or fewer students? Does it matter to Democrats that the cost of the program is immense but empirical research has shown little or no improvement in academic achievement? Does it matter to Democrats that the program is having a number of unintended effects, such as that it is causing good teachers to flee inner-city schools to take the new jobs that this program is creating in the suburbs? Does it matter to them that the vast majority of school districts have more pressing needs than hiring new teachers? Of course not. Our Democratic colleagues sincerely feel that it would be helpful for the Federal Government to pay the salaries of 100,000 primary school teachers. When Democrats are sincere the taxpayers had better hang on to their wallets, because no evidence or logic will stop a sincere Democrat from trying to spend the taxpayers' money.

This case is no exception. Our Democratic colleagues were not content to add a \$1.4 billion mandate on funds that were already in this bill and thus were part of the budget; they had to propose spending another \$350 million on the program. Of course, they decided to increase total Federal spending instead of finding offsets. Democrats note that we are generating larger than expected surpluses this year, and they complain that we really ought to let them spend some of that money instead of using it for tax relief and debt reduction. We note that we have already agreed to raise the budget caps by close to \$50 billion, and we have agreed to supplemental funding out of last year's budget; how much must they spend? Our budget is now close to \$1.9 trillion. Out of that huge, monstrous budget, they could not find even 1-cent worth of spending that was less important than giving tax relief or reducing the debt? By insisting on making the Government bigger to pay for their new spending plan, they are effectively saying that they think every last cent of the Government's spending is more important than any tax relief or any debt reduction. We emphatically disagree. Americans need and deserve tax relief—according even to the Clinton/Gore Administration's calculations, Federal taxes this year will consume 20.4 percent of America's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is the highest percentage since World War II, and Federal income taxes will consume the highest percentage of America's GDP ever recorded—9.9 percent. Debt reduction is just as needed—we now have a national debt of nearly \$6 trillion. Balancing the budget has led to huge economic growth and huge surpluses; if we go wild spending money now, making the Government bigger, we will quit generating surpluses, and we will still have the debt. We have a rare chance right now to provide tax relief and to cut the debt. Congress has already increased spending greatly this year; it is time to stop spending. We urge our colleagues to reject this amendment.